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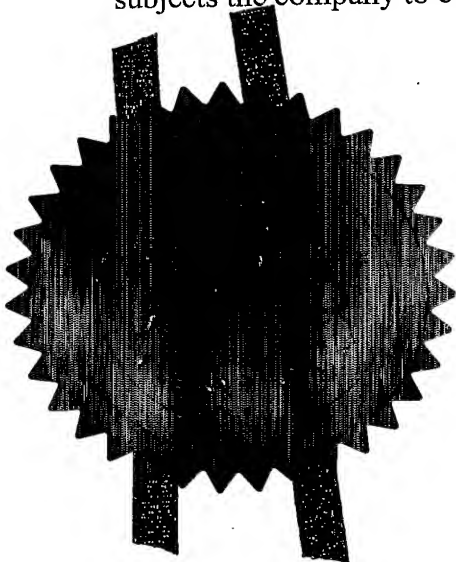
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15MAR04 E880840-1 001147

P01/7700 9-00-0405716.2 NONE

Patent application number

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0405716.2

13 MAR 2004

Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)

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GB

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6304307001

Title of the invention

Safety Seat

Name of your agent (if you have one)

NIGEL BROOKS CPA

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode)

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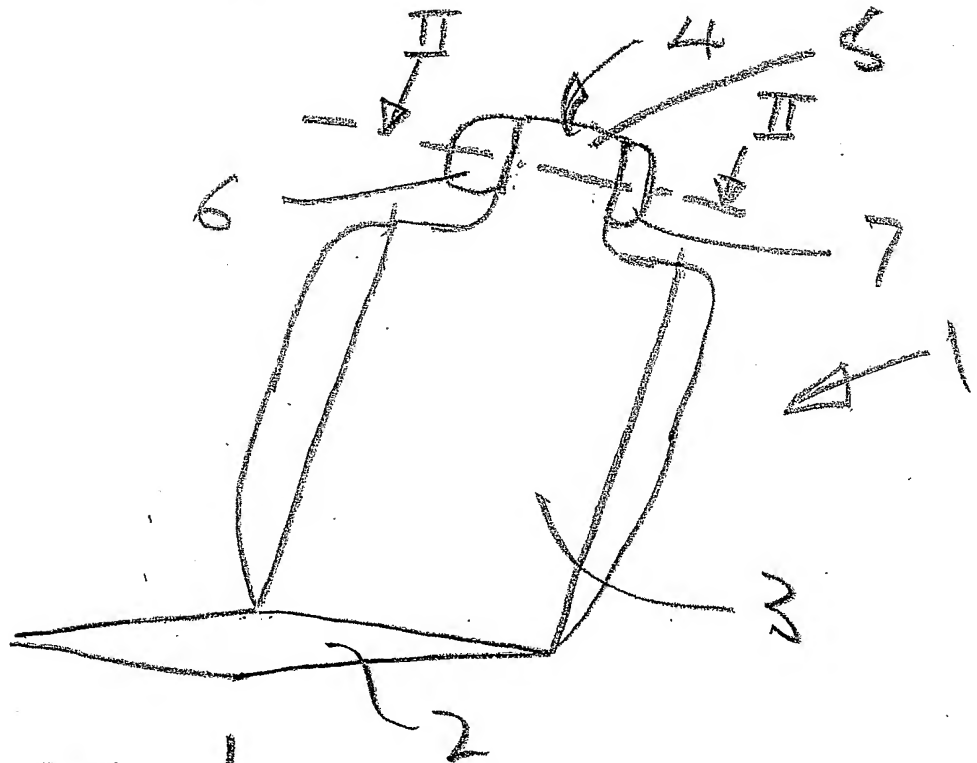


FIGURE 1

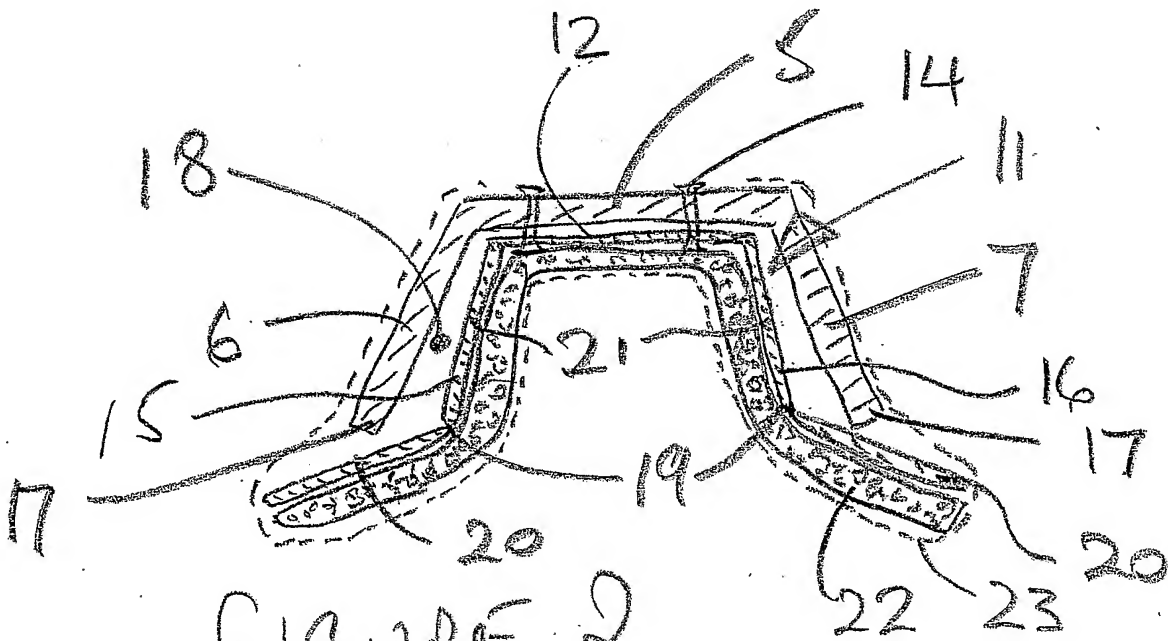


FIGURE 2

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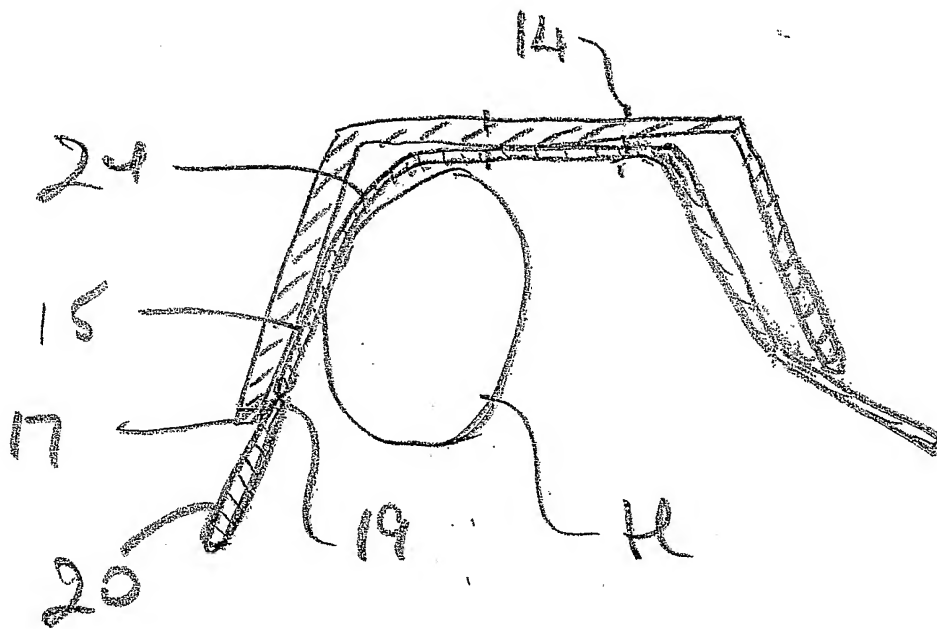


FIGURE 3

Safety Seat

The present invention relates to a safety seat, particularly though not exclusively a child safety seat for an automobile.

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Safety seats are designed:

- to restrain the occupant from being thrown more than a certain distance from the seat in the event of an accident and
 - to limit the deceleration (both its maximum value and its period above a
- 10 threshold) experienced by an occupant.

A direction in which less distance is available before impact of an occupant with an automobile part than some others is sideways towards a window, door or door pillar. To restrain sideways movement of an occupant's head, seats can be provided

15 with a head protecting structure in the form of a vertical extension of a back of the seat, the extension having forwards extending wings for limiting lateral movement of the head. In this specification, this structure is referred to as a "winged headrest". To avoid the wings causing the self-same problem that the seat is intended to avoid, namely injury from impact with a hard surface, the winged headrest is normally

20 provided with a padded lining.

The object of the present invention is to provide a safety seat with improved head protection.

25

According to the invention there is provided a safety seat comprising:

- a winged headrest, the head rest having:
 - a rear head support and
 - forwards-and-sideways extending support wings, fixed to the rear head support at respective opposite sides thereof
 - deformable lining wings for the support wings, each lining wing
- 30
- being secured to the headrest at a root between the rear head support and its support wing and
 - abutting the distal end of its support wing and

- defining a void between itself and its support wing,
- whereby on lateral impact of the head of an occupant of the safety seat with one of the lining wings, energy is absorbed in deformation of the lining wing towards its support wing.

5

It should be noted that the safety seat of the invention has been defined in a forwards facing orientation. If the seat is installed to face rearwards, the head support will be in front of the wings, which will be rearwards-and-sideways facing.

10

Despite careful design of winged headrests and their linings, their effectiveness can be limited by the need to enable the occupant to feel unencumbered, encumbrance tending to cause nausea.

15

In accordance with an important preferred feature of the invention, the deformable lining wings each have:

20

- a forwards extension past the distal end of its support wing,
- whereby on lateral impact as above, as the lining wing is deformed towards its support wing, it pivots about the distal end and the forwards extension is pivotally moved inwards with respect to the lateral extent of the wings.

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An advantage of this preferred feature is that a safety seat fitted with the forwards extensions provides enhanced protection without the feeling of encumbrance that would result from having them fixed in the position to which they are adapted to pivot.

30

Whilst it can be envisaged that the deformable lining wings could be individually connected to the rear head support, as by tongues on the lining wings engaging in slots in the rear head support; in the preferred embodiment, the two lining wings are interconnected by a crosspiece abutting the rear head support.

Again, it can be envisaged that the lining wings and their forwards extension could be of uniform cross-section; in the preferred embodiment, they are each

provided with a hinge line close to but set in from the respective distal end, whereby they are weakened to enable the hinge lines to abut the support wings on deformation to provide predictable inwards movement of the support wings. The weakening is preferably a living hinge.

5

The lining wings can be provided with energy absorbent pads on their sides away from their support wings, i.e. on their inner sides.

10 Normally the lining wings and their pads where provided, together with their crosspiece where provided, will be covered with upholstery fabric.

To help understanding of the invention, a specific embodiment thereof will now be described by way of example and with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

15

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a shell of a child safety seat to be equipped with a head rest in accordance with the invention;

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view on the line II-II in Figure 1 including the lining and upholstery of the head rest;

20 Figure 3 is a simplified view similar to Figure 2 of an occupant's head impacting the left-hand wing of the seat.

Referring first to Figure 1 of the drawings, a child safety seat has a chassis or shell 1 comprising a squab 2 and a back 3. The shell can be a unitary moulding or a two part moulding of the squab and the back. Above the back, the shell has a head part 4 having a rear head support 5 and a pair of right and left forwards-and-sideways extending support wings 6,7. The shell is a polypropylene moulding with the head rest being moulded integrally with the rest of the moulding.

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In accordance with the invention and as shown in Figure 2, a deformable lining 11, also a polypropylene moulding, is provided in the head rest. It has a crosspiece 12, clipped 14 to the head support 5 and right and left deformable wings 15,16. These are longer than the support wings 5,6 of the head part 4, extending past distal edges 17 of the support wings. It should be noted also that the deformable wings are spaced inwards from the support wings, with voids 18 defined between

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them. The deformable wings are divided into two in their forwards extent by a living hinge 19 into a front portion 20 and a rear portion 21. The living hinge is positioned just inside the distal edges of the shell wings.

5 The injection moulded lining has its own foam material lining 22, the whole being covered with upholstery 23.

10 The result of the arrangement is that if as shown in Figure 3, an occupant's head H impacts the lining in side impact of the vehicle equipped with the seat, the relevant lining wing will be pressed against the shell wing. This involves energy absorbing (maximum acceleration limiting) deformation of not only the foam material, but also of the lining wing and to a less extent of the shell wing. These deformations lead to the result that the acceleration of the head is limited from what it would have been in the absence of the lining wings. The lining wing deformation 24
15 is shown in Figure 3 and with it compressing against the shell wing, the front portion 20 of the lining wing pivots forwards about the shell edge 17, from a position swept back with respect to the shell wing to a position generally in line with the compressed inner portion of the lining. This provides for protection of the head in impact with a side window for instance even outside the distal edges, by approximately the length of
20 the front portion beyond the living hinge. Whilst such impact may be thought unlikely if the head has impacted inside the head rest, we are aware from tests that there is a high likelihood of the head moving out of the head rest during a side impact.

25 Typically, the lining moulding will be 3mm thick and the foam material 12mm thick, with a 28gm/ltr density in EPS. Both lining will be reduced to half its thickness at the hinge. The foam also can be reduced in thickness at the hinge, to facilitate the pivoting.